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Korea, Republic of

Fairs Products Specific

Country of Origin Labeling for Beef at Restaurants

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Approved by: **William L. Brant II**
U.S. Embassy, Seoul

Prepared by: Yong Keun Ban / Michael T. Henney

Report Highlights:

The Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry may soon propose mandatory “Country of Origin” labeling on beef sold in restaurants to answer “right to know” claims by consumers. The planned proposed regulatory requirement would most likely be limited in scope and product coverage. The Ministry of Health and Welfare’s concurrence is not guaranteed as that agency appears to hold a jaundice eye toward such a regulatory requirement.

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Seoul[KS1], KS

Executive Summary

The Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry (MAF) reports it is planning to introduce a mandatory “Country of Origin” labeling requirement for beef sold in restaurants effective the later half 2000. Reportedly, a consumer’s right to know is the motivating factor for this regulatory change. Before they can adopt this regulatory action, the Ministry of Health & Welfare (MHW), which holds regulatory oversight on the restaurant sector, must be swayed to approve the proposed regulation.

Gist of Plan: The new regulation would require restaurants to include the country-of-origin label, domestic origin meats included, next to meat dishes listed on the menu. The following is an example of how the new regulation would be implemented: “beef steak (Country of Origin: U.S.) - 10,000 won/150 grams.” Current regulations require restaurants to label only the unit price for each meat dish. The “country of origin” label would be besides the required pricing information.

Steps to finalize the new regulation: First, MAF would seek MHW’s endorsement for such mandatory labeling. MAF would need to decide the range of restaurants and types of meat dishes to be subject to the new labeling requirement. MAF would then issue a proposed regulation, open it for public comment then publishes a final rule in the government Gazette. To carry out, MAF may initially strive to impose the new labeling requirement on beef dishes only due to cost considerations for restaurants and political sensitivities within the beef sector. Further, the new regulation would most likely be implemented with the larger-sized restaurants first, then gradual widened to all restaurants.

Comment: Reportedly, MHW remains strongly opposed to adoption of such a labeling requirement. Also, MAF has been pressing MHW to adopt its country-of-origin labeling proposal for beef served in restaurants for nearly four years without success. It should be noted MAF does have a propensity to air internal policy discussion publicly to sway its outcome.